

Tourism Marketing and Promotion

NEGRC
NORTHEAST GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

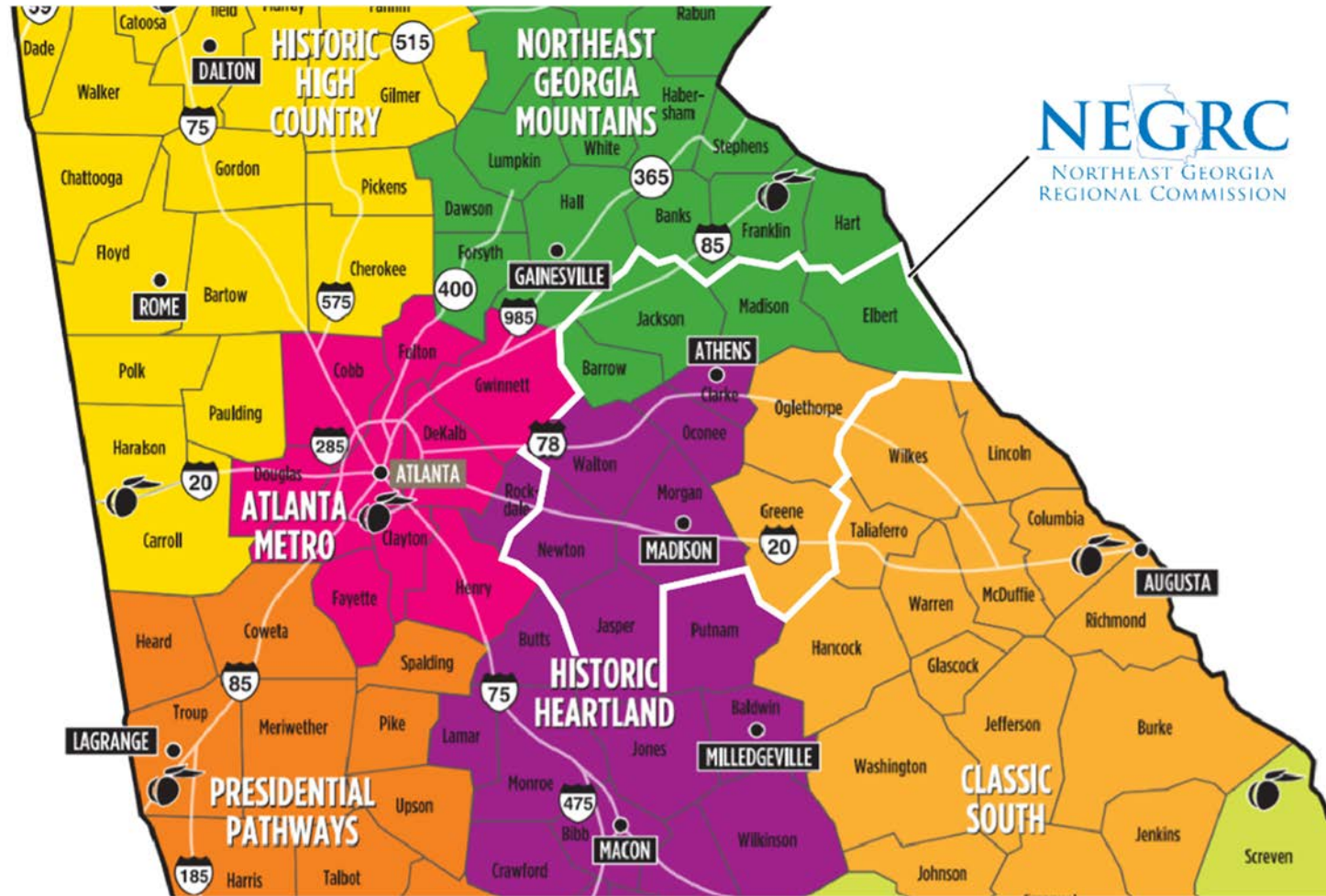




Introduction

Tourism is a vital industry to the State of Georgia's economy. According to the Department of Economic Development, tourism generates \$63.1 billion in revenue annually and drives business growth through the promotion of unique and community-based experiences.¹ However, marketing tourist attractions can present challenges to local governments as it can be time consuming and costly. The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) has created this guide to assist local governments with their promotional needs. The guide highlights best practices in tourism marketing and provides additional resources that local governments can use to improve and expand on their tourism programs. A priority of the NEGRC Regional Plan (2018) is to provide tools to improve tourism promotion and marketing within Northeast Georgia. The Regional Plan's Excellence Standards created the framework for this document and committed the NEGRC to participate actively in regional tourism planning and promotion efforts. This document seeks to meet the goals laid out in the NEGRC Regional Plan by highlighting industry best practices and analyzing current tourism efforts.

¹ "2018 Travel Economic Impact on Georgia State, Counties and Regions," <https://industry.exploregeorgia.org/resource/2018-travel-economic-impact-georgia-state-counties-and-regions444>



Credit: Georgia Department of Economic Development Tourism Regions Map

The Northeast Georgia Region

The NEGRC serves 12 counties and 54 municipal governments in Northeast Georgia, encompassing 3,260 square miles. The estimated population of the region is 612,781 (Esri). To help improve and expand tourism, the State of Georgia is divided into nine tourism regions made up of counties that share relevant attributes. The Northeast Georgia region encompasses parts of three tourism regions: ***Northeast Georgia Mountains, Historic Heartland, and Classic South.***

Tourism Types and Practices in Each Tourism Region

The Northeast Georgia Mountains

The Northeast Georgia Mountains tourism region encompasses the northeast section of the State. The region is known for its rugged, scenic beauty as well as its small towns and other attractions. The counties within this region that are also NEGRC-member jurisdictions are Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison. The region’s top three tourist sectors are Family/Life events (which includes traveling to visit family and attend weddings, funerals, and graduations) (57%), Culture (28%), and Nature (25%). Most visitors are Georgia residents (67%), and the majority of tourism-based travel to this region is leisure-related (74%).²

Tourism’s Economic Impact on the Northeast Georgia Mountains

	Expenditures	Payroll	Employment	State Tax	Local Tax
NORTHEAST GEORGIA MOUNTAINS TOTAL	\$1,182,350,000	\$262,860,000	10,620	\$51,170,00	\$33,260,00
Barrow	\$49,240,000	\$8,670,000	410	\$1,920,000	\$1,320,000
Elbert	\$20,110,000	\$3,760,000	170	\$860,000	\$540,000
Jackson	\$69,940,000	\$12,290,000	570	\$2,740,00	\$1,930,000
Madison	\$11,610,000	\$2,160,000	100	\$470,000	\$290,000

Source: “2018 Travel Economic Impact on Georgia State, Counties and Regions”



Figure 1: The Historic Courthouse in Elberton, Georgia

² “2018 Georgia Tourism Region Visitor Profile - Northeast Georgia Mountains,” <https://industry.exploregeorgia.org/resource/2018-georgia-tourism-region-visitor-profile-northeast-georgia-mountains>



Figure 2 Genuine Georgia (Greensboro) began as a Downtown Development Authority effort to create a space for local artists to feature and sell their work. Today, the shop is privately owned, but continues to feature only handmade pieces from Georgia artisans.

The Classic South

The Classic South tourism region is situated in the eastern portion of the State, abutting the South Carolina border. This region offers tourists state parks, golf courses, antebellum homes, and historic downtowns. Greene County and Oglethorpe County are the Northeast Georgia communities within this district. The region’s top three tourist sectors are Family/Life Events (45%), Culture (19%), and Libation and Culinary (17%). Most visitors are non-Georgia residents (74%), and most tourist activities are leisure-related (89%).³

Tourism’s Economic Impact on the Classic South

	Expenditures	Payroll	Employment	State Tax	Local Tax
CLASSIC SOUTH TOTAL	\$957,700,000	\$219,110,000	8,220	\$42,160,000	\$25,670,000
Greene	\$56,080,000	\$16,020,000	580	\$2,750,000	\$1,520,000
Oglethorpe	\$4,850,000	\$84,000,	30	\$190,000	\$110,000

Source: “2018 Travel Economic Impact on Georgia State, Counties and Regions”

³ “2018 Georgia Tourism Region Visitor Profile - Classic South,” <https://industry.exploregeorgia.org/resource/2018-georgia-tourism-region-visitor-profile-classic-south>

The Historic Heartland

The Historic Heartland is situated in the center of the state and is home to Athens, one of the nation’s most historic college towns, and culinary experiences and lake retreats. The Northeast Georgia counties in this tourism region include Clarke, Oconee, Walton, Morgan, Newton, and Jasper. The region’s top three sectors are Family/Life events (34%), Libation and Culinary (17%), and Culture (14%). A majority of visitors are Georgia residents (59.9 %) and most travel to the region for leisure trips (73%).⁴

Tourism’s Economic Impact on the Historic Heartland

	Expenditures	Payroll	Employment	State Tax	Local Tax
HISTORIC HEARTLAND TOTAL	\$1,717,490,000	\$381,010,000	15,560	\$73,390,000	\$47,440,000
Clarke	\$330,500,000	\$69,930,000	2,970	\$13,710,000	\$8,890,000
Jasper	\$6,720,000	\$2,060,000	80	\$300,000	\$180,000
Morgan	\$53,840,000	\$11,520,000	460	\$2,450,000	\$1,550,000
Newton	\$142,900,000	\$28,210,000	1,240	\$6,230,000	\$4,080,000
Oconee	\$44,320,000	\$11,780,000	420	\$1,890,000	\$1,120,000
Walton	\$80,730,000	\$16,180,000	740	\$3,180,000	\$2,110,000

Source: “2018 Travel Economic Impact on Georgia State, Counties and Regions”



Figure 3 The Firefly Trail is a planned, 39-mile trail that will connect downtown Athens to Union Point. Currently, portions of the trail in Athens-Clarke and Oglethorpe counties are built and construction is underway in Greene County. Visit fireflytrail.com for maps and up-to-date reports on the trail’s construction.

⁴ “2018 Georgia Tourism Region Visitor Profile - Historic Heartland,” <https://industry.exploregeorgia.org/resource/2018-georgia-tourism-region-visitor-profile-historic-heartland>

Categories of Tourism in the Region

Tourism can be divided into categories of interest and purpose. Knowing what type of tourism attracts visitors to a region can be beneficial to developing marketing strategies and expanding businesses and opportunities to meet the needs of visitors. The following are tourism types found in the NEGRC region.

Agritourism is a unique experience that brings visitors directly to farms, orchards, and other agricultural production sites. In Georgia, agriculture and tourism are two of the state's top economic generators; therefore, the combination of the two has the potential to be a leading tourism industry. Jasper and Morgan Counties generate the most income from agriculture- and nature-based tourism in the NEGRC region,⁵ but agritourism continues to grow and thrive in other counties as well. The Georgia Department of Agriculture's Georgia Grown program promotes agribusinesses by bringing producers, processors, suppliers, distributors, retailers, and consumers together industrywide. Visitors can locate farms for "Pick Your Own" experiences, wine-tasting tours, weddings, and other farm-related adventures.

Family/Life Events Tourism brings people into an area to attend life events or visit family members. This includes weddings, funerals, and graduations. Northeast Georgia venues such as Chateau Elan (Braselton) and Serenata Farm (Morgan County) are marketable for weddings and draw family/life event tourists to the area. Greene County's Convention and Visitor Bureau focuses tourism marketing on wedding tourism at Lake Oconee.

Libation and Culinary Tourism includes winery, brewery, and distillery tours as well as trips for dining experiences. Athens is home to two James Beard award-winning restaurants, 5 and 10 and Weaver D's and five craft breweries with a sixth in development. Seven different brewery tours are available in Athens from locations such as Terrapin, Southern Brewing, and Creature Comforts breweries. The Blue Willow Inn draws tourists to Social Circle based off of the success of the restaurant's cookbook.



Figure 4 The Shields-Ethridge Heritage Farm (Jackson County) has been a working agricultural complex since 1799.

⁵ 2017 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, <https://www.caes.uga.edu/content/dam/caes-subsite/caed/publications/annual-reports-farm-gate-value-reports/2017-farm-gate-value-report.pdf>

Cultural Tourism has several subsets including the following:

Music Tourism is a major economic generator for Athens-Clarke County, with several music venues such as the Georgia Theater, the 40 Watt Club, the Foundry, and Hendershot's drawing visitors, and the construction of a new amphitheatre underway. The Athens Welcome Center offers a [downloadable walking tour of Athens Music History](#) features a history of successful bands such as REM, the B-52s, and Widespread Panic. Other areas of Northeast Georgia also have musical roots, including Trisha Yearwood's hometown of Monticello. Local musicians are featured in traditional and pop-up venues throughout Northeast Georgia, from small sets at a local eatery or shop like the Front Porch Book Store (Winterville), to festivals such as the Green Tomato Festival in Juliette, or the multi-day festival AthFest (Athens).

Historical (Heritage) Tourism is traveling to experience places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past. This tourism type can be found in all counties and cities of Northeast Georgia and the state. Examples include the Crawford Long Museum in Jefferson (shown here), Union Point Museum, Old Church and Kitty's Cottage in Oxford, Social Circle Heritage Museum, the Morton Theatre in Athens, and Heritage Hall in Madison.

Film Tourism is a burgeoning industry in Georgia for people who love visiting sites from movies and television. Jasper County and Monticello bring fans of the movie *My Cousin Vinny*, and Newton County hosts Mystic Falls Tours involving sites and locations from *The Vampire Diaries* in Covington. Madison's historic downtown was the site of *Goosebumps*, *Halloween II*, *Guardians of the Galaxy: Vol. 2*, and many more productions. Since Georgia is known as the Hollywood of the South, the potential for movie tourism in Georgia is expected to grow.



Figure 5 The Crawford Long Museum (Jefferson) celebrates medical history.

Tourism Best Practices

The Seven Ps

When marketing and promoting tourism, it can be useful to follow the strategy of the Seven Ps: **Product, Price, Promotion, Place, People, Process,** and **Physical** evidence. The best endeavors will utilize a combination of strategies involving the Ps.⁶

First, when marketing a **product**, consider key features and benefits that visitors will want and need, including (but not limited to) styling, quality, repairs, and accessories. A tourist attraction, a culinary experience, walking tour, and even a town all can be considered products. For a town or local government, the collective tourist experience can also be considered your product. A product can be a way to connect people outside of a space to a community. For example, Oconee Brewing in Greensboro ships beer cans far outside of the city. People from far away can identify and connect to Greensboro through their connection to this product.

Price is also an important aspect of marketing to all consumers, and the amount a visitor would be willing to pay for experiences, lodging, and dining must first be identified before budgets can be determined to include space for profit margins, payment methods, overheads, and other costs. To attract visitors and retain competitive advantage, discounts, seasonal pricing, and other promotions should also be considered. Multiple tourist attractions along with hotels, restaurants, and retail locations can work together to do joint

sales and promotions that increase visibility and encourage tourists to visit and pursue multiple locations and experiences.

Promotion includes activities used to make visitors aware of products and services, including advertising, sales approaches, and direct marketing. These strategies are generally referred to as marketing tactics. Promotions can be based online through websites and social platforms as well as in print-form via mailings, brochures, flyers, or newspaper advertising. For the tourism industry, it is vital that tourist attractions band together with local government entities to pool resources for Promotion. Creating a branded experience for a city or town benefits everyone's promotional budget, but also encourages cross-promotion between local entities, for example, hotels recommending locally owned restaurants to guests. Different activities and attractions appeal to visitors from varying profiles and backgrounds. Pooling resources expands the ability to promote through different mediums, reaching a greater, more varied audience. One customer who might respond to a print ad in a magazine might be different from a customer that will respond to digital formats.

Place is where products, ideas, and services are seen, made, sold, exchanged, or distributed. Access for visitors is key and it is important to make sure the marketed site or locations are accessible to as many people as possible. Visitors must also be able to clearly identify the location and find their way to and from the site through clearly marked signage. This includes directions to cities and towns as well as to attractions, restaurants, and lodging. It can also be beneficial to employ wayfinding technologies such as Waze and Google Maps to develop directions that will lead customers directly to the Place.

⁶ <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/marketing-sales/marketing-promotion/marketing-basics/seven-ps-marketing>

People refers to customer service, a vital component of providing a positive experience for visitors. Good customer service and a positive experience is “marketing a brand” because visitors are likely to share with others and spread the word about their positive experience. Visitors are even more likely to share a negative experience that can go viral on social media, so it should be avoided at all costs. People are vital in the role of executing the Process of Promotion and marketing.

Process refers to the act of delivering products and services to visitors. Being “easy to do business with” and having good practices in place ensures that the same standard of service is repeatedly delivered to visitors. Increasing efficiency also saves time and money. “Southern Hospitality” is a well-known Process that many visitors expect when touring in Georgia, and when visitors have a positive experience, they are likely to return, participate in other activities within a community, and spread positive stories by word of mouth.

Physical evidence refers to everything visitors see when interacting with their destination or experience, including signage, interior design and the layout of a physical space, the environment where the Product or service is provided, packaging, branding and even the way staff or tourism representatives dress and act. Local governments should work with their chamber of commerce, along with attractions, retail stores, and restaurants to create Physical evidence that is welcoming, interesting, and reflects branding.



Branding

Branding a tourist attraction means creating a destination, a sense of place that is unique, and a different experience than one a traveler could find in other places. When tourists go on vacation, whether they travel locally or out-of-state, they want to experience a sense of adventure or a unique opportunity. Many tourists search for unusual and interesting places nearby providing culture or opportunities to view places with historical meaning. Utilizing unique marketing methods can support the promotion of a distinct brand to support any tourism venture, which will encourage increased patronage. Branding methods include developing a memorable and identifiable logo and creating promotional marketing material in support of your brand. The logos below are examples of recognizable branding that can be printed on t-shirts, brochures, and signage to promote a sense of unity and place.

For outdoor signage, the Outdoor Advertising Office at the Georgia Department of Transportation, as directed by The Highway Beautification Act of 1965, has developed standards for the effective control of outdoor advertising signs, devices, and displays. Controlling signage along designated routes promotes safety to the travelling public and preserves the natural beauty along Georgia's roadways. Tasteful utilization of signs helps promote a destination and capitalizes on recognizable Georgia branding.

Social Media Tips for Tourism

Social media is an important tool for implementing branding and tourism marketing strategies. While social media can be challenging due to time and budget constraints, taking advantage of free applications can benefit the community beyond what traditional modes of communication and promotion could. Successful strategies will employ multiple platforms, but practitioners should consider utilizing Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, as well as other platforms (depending on the target audience) such as Snapchat and TikTok. A majority of visitors utilize social media and online resources before planning their next trip.⁷ Communities should promote their destinations using social media to increase awareness among key target audiences, create a memorable connection with domestic travelers through unique tone and voice, and leverage residential pride in the community. Destinations can increase engagement on social channels not only with potential visitors, but also within their own communities, and build a social network with similar sites and destinations that can drive traffic to one another.

Advertising Strategy

Use advertising options on social media to target audiences and increase views on video content, increase newsletter signups, and contribute to travel guide orders and downloads. Social media accounts can be linked to post across platforms. Develop a brand hashtag that can be used across platforms to drive users to your sites and pages. Examples of hashtags from Northeast Georgia include #athensiloveyou, #visitoconeega, #WinderWindDown, and #makeitmonticello

⁷ https://www.olapic.com/resources/the-impact-of-social-media-on-travel-inspiration_blog-p1aw-f1tr-v1th-t1sm/



Figure 6 Athens placed painted bulldogs around the town for visitors and residents to find and post pictures with on social media.

Facebook Tactics: Post at least every two days, remembering to occasionally post in the evening. Utilize Facebook’s scheduling application to spread out content distribution, as more frequent posting oversaturates the organization’s potential reach. Also, posting at different times of day broadens the reach to suit different followers’ use patterns. Use platform-specific content (videos, Facebook Stories, Facebook Events, Facebook Live videos, photography) to engage regional and national audiences and leverage residential pride to encourage shares, comments, and reactions, thus increasing awareness of the attraction.⁸

Instagram Tactics: Post twice a day to increase reach. Post a story at least once a week; stories will last for 24 hours before they disappear. Share user-generated content (UGC) from locals to generate a sense of community and UGC from recent travelers and influencers to create real-time awareness of local destinations. Use popular, targeted hashtags to increase the reach of your posts among users who are not followers.

Twitter Tactics: Twitter can be the trickiest of the platforms to use, as it can be difficult to gain followers and stay in their newsfeed unless they engage with your tweets. The best way to use the platform is to constantly tweet. This can be through original tweets or retweets. Twitter may be most useful for attractions, restaurants, and local governments to reach their intended visitors/customers, and also can function as a customer service mechanism for the community. Post 10-12 times a day, including retweets of partner content to stay relevant and to be noticed in a follower’s feed. Post and retweet coverage of Georgia destinations by influential media organizations including Southern Living, Coastal Living, and USA Today to increase awareness and gain followers. Utilize trending topics to increase awareness of Georgia destinations

among non-followers. Utilize the platform as a customer-service arm, answering questions, providing suggestions and information, and engaging in conversations with potential travelers and passionate residents. Hashtags from Facebook and Instagram can also be utilized on Twitter to link information about the community.

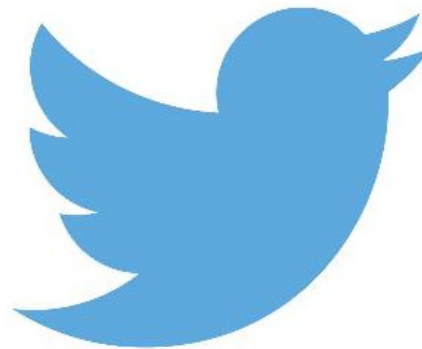
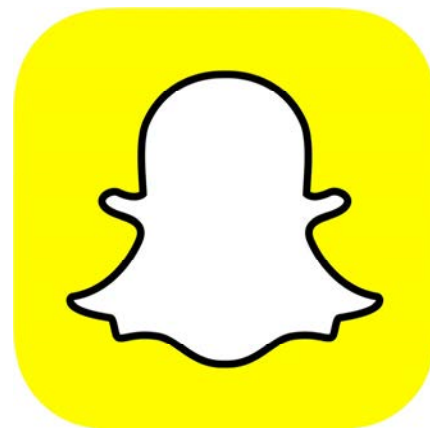
Pinterest Tactics: Pin as new or updated content is available. Pin best photos from content on ExploreGeorgia.org and optimize for the platform (large images, text overlay, keyword-rich descriptions, tagged links). Pinterest can be especially helpful for communities that would like to market themselves as wedding destinations.

YouTube Tactics: Post video content with keyword-rich titles, descriptions, and tagged links to the organization’s website. Promote these videos heavily within 48 hours through paid advertising and/or organic social media sharing, to reach more people. YouTube videos can be shared via most other platforms. For good customer service, be responsive to comments to encourage engagement. Utilize cards to encourage additional video views, other social media platforms, and recommend partner content. (*Cards* are interactive elements added to *YouTube* videos that have links to other videos, playlists, websites, social media, merchandise, or channels.)

Reddit Tactics: Reddit works on user-generated content that can be upvoted or downvoted by Redditors. Create a user profile and utilize the calendar feature to advertise upcoming events and RedditAds to create reminders for the date and time of an event. Reddit can also be used to develop a network with other communities and provide excellent customer service to residents and visitors.⁹

⁸ State of Georgia

⁹ <https://www.dreamgrow.com/reddit-strategy-tips/>



Snapchat Tactics: The highly visual nature of Snapchat makes it a great tool for tourism marketing. Although the images disappear, it fits with a growing trend of ephemeral experiences from consumers.¹⁰ The stories function is similar to those that can be found on Facebook and Instagram. Geofiltering allows visitors to share their location through a graphic overlay on a photo. It is a great way to capture images from travelers in their destination and also invite them to promote it to others. Snapchat can be difficult to maintain and is mainly geared toward younger audiences. While a community may not decide to create a Snapchat account, [it can create free geofilters for events or the community](#) that can be a great free marketing tool.

TikTok Tactics: TikTok is another platform that is geared toward a younger audience and known for filters, video-editing, music, and emphasis on fun.¹¹ The platform can be used to amplify stories from visitors and residents. Use hashtags to connect to popular content and events. Working with TikTok influencers can bring attention to content and promote tourism to a younger audience.

¹⁰ <https://www.mytravelresearch.com/how-to-do-travel-marketing-on-snapchat/>

¹¹ <https://destinationthink.com/blog/content-marketing-trends-dmo-2020/>

Resources and Social Media Marketing Present in Each Tourism Region

Social media presence is important to be a viable destination in the current tourism market. A county by county analysis of social media focusing on tourism is presented below to assist local governments with identifying areas in which they may improve their ability to appeal to tourists. An analysis of the online presence determined which tourism type each county appears to offer and focus marketing.

The Northeast Georgia Mountains

Barrow County: Tourism promotion in Barrow County focuses on nature, recreation, and the Chateau Elan Winery. In addition to its own website, the Barrow County Chamber of Commerce Facebook page posts daily. The City of Winder promotes tourism through its own website, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, although the Twitter account is not featured with the other applications at the bottom of the Winder website. The Town of Braselton operates the Braselton Visitors Bureau Authority and manages the community's social media accounts and the Facebook page is updated regularly.

Selected tourist attractions in Barrow County: Barrow County Courthouse, Barrow County Museum, Ft. Yargo St. Park, Chateau Elan, Mulberry RiverWalk

Elbert County: Elbert County offers nature and heritage tourism opportunities. The Elbert County Chamber of Commerce is the main social media presence

for tourists in Elbert County. The Facebook page is updated several times weekly and posts focus on the promotion of community events and small businesses. Online promotion of tourism in Elbert County also utilizes sites like exploregeorgia.com and Tripadvisor. The tourism industry in Elbert County could also benefit from separate social media that was dedicated to promoting local resources.

Selected tourist attractions in Elbert County: Richard B. Russell State Park, Bobby Brown Park, Elbert Theatre, Elberton Granite Museum & Exhibit, Home Sweet Home Elberton



Figure 7 Elbert Theatre in Elberton, Georgia

Jackson County: Tourism in Jackson County includes agritourism, heritage, nature, and retail tourism. The Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce and Jackson County Welcome Center promote tourism to visitors. The Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce has a Facebook page that is updated daily and a Twitter account that tweets several times per week. The Welcome Center has a Facebook account that posts daily and a Twitter account that also tweets daily. The Welcome Center also has an Instagram account. All of the social media accounts for the Jackson County Welcome Center also serve as the social media accounts for the Jackson County Government.

The City of Commerce has an “Experience” section on its website that is a great tool for promoting the City. It also has a Facebook page that posts frequently about tourism-related subjects and a Twitter account that has not posted in the last year. Social media is operated by Commerce Main Street, which posts community information as well as tourism-related news. Main Street Jefferson, Georgia, has a Facebook account that posts daily, an Instagram account that is updated weekly, and a Twitter account that is linked to the Instagram account. The website for Main Street Jefferson also promotes tourism in the City and includes a walking tour.

Selected tourist attractions in Jackson County: Crawford W. Long Museum, Shields-Ethridge Farm, Crow’s Lake, Jackson County Geocaching Heritage Trail, Jackson County Courthouse, Funopolis, The Veggie Patch at Bouchard Farms, Tanger Outlet Center, Atlanta Dragway

Madison County: The Madison County Chamber of Commerce has a Facebook account that is updated frequently and regularly promotes small businesses in the county.

Selected tourist attractions in Madison County: Boutier Winery, Daffodil Hill Florist, Gifts, and Art, The Polka Dot Peach, Broad River Outpost, Madison County Courthouse, Danielsville Hardware & Antiques



Figure 8 Madison County Historic Courthouse in Danielsville, Georgia

The Historic Heartland

Athens-Clarke County: Athens has a vibrant arts and culinary scene. The community promotes music, heritage, and tourism centered on the University of Georgia (UGA). UGA tourism includes not only visits by prospective students and people connected to education, but also sports tourism. Football alone draws hundreds of thousands of people each year to Athens. The Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) has very active Facebook and Instagram accounts with posts at least once daily, often more. The Twitter account usually tweets 3 to 4 times a day. The Athens CVB also has YouTube and Pinterest pages. The Visit Athens brand is an example of excellence in promotion and marketing for the region. The Athens CVB actively engages the local community by promoting events and activities to residents through social media and newsletters, and also promotes the community to potential visitors.

The Athens Area Chamber of Commerce has an active Facebook account with daily posts, an Instagram account that posts weekly, and YouTube and LinkedIn accounts with few posts. Their active social media fosters an engaged community of tourists, businesses, and local residents who are all involved in the promotion of Athens. Historic Athens is a nonprofit organization that works to celebrate and conserve community heritage in Athens. Their Facebook and Instagram accounts are both active daily in promoting the history and culture of Athens. The Athens Welcome Center, which is administered by the Athens CVB, utilizes Facebook and Instagram to post several times per week.

Selected tourist Attractions in Clarke County: University of Georgia/Sanford Stadium, Ware-Lyndon Historic House, Terrapin Beer Company, Creature Comforts Brewing Co, 40 Watt Club, Georgia Theatre, T.R.R. Cobb House, Bear Hollow Zoo, Morton Theatre, Church-Waddel-Brumby House/Athens Welcome Center, Taylor-Grady House, The Tree That Owns Itself, Wray-Nicholson House, Georgia Museum of Art, The Foundry, Carter-Coile Country Doctor's Museum, The Grit Restaurant, 5&10, and Weaver D's

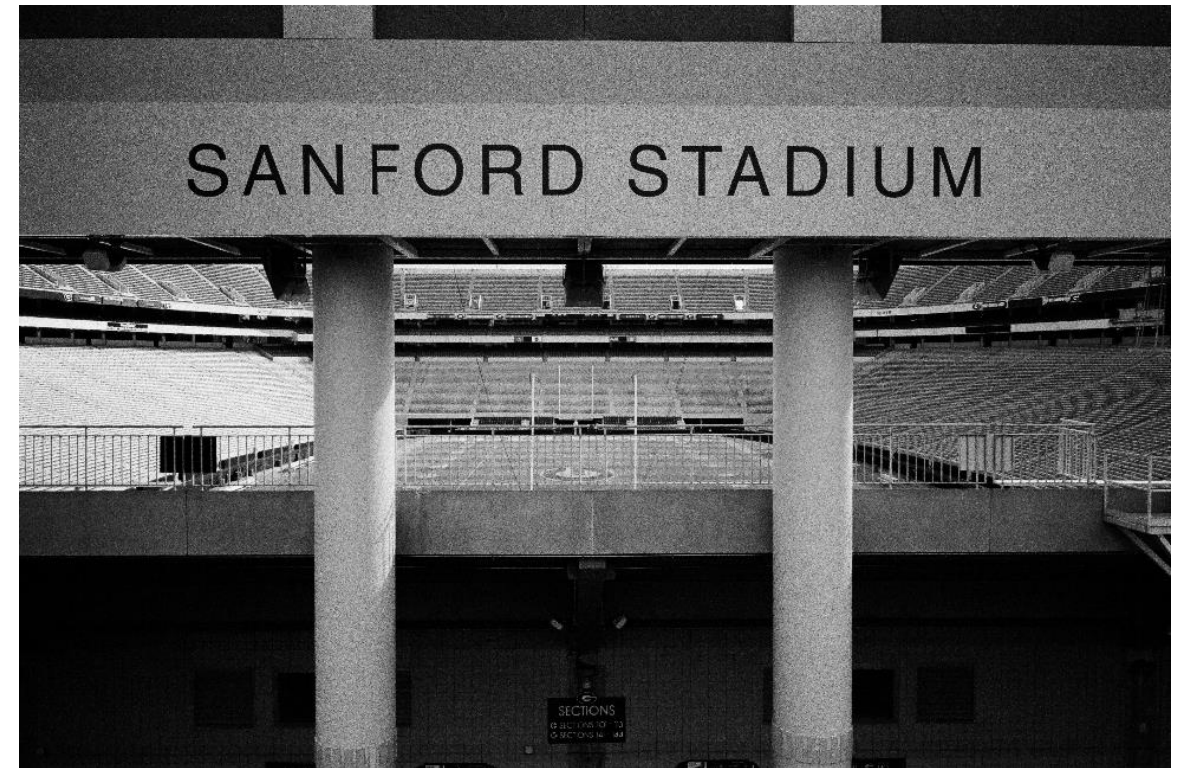


Figure 9 Sanford Stadium, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

Jasper County: Jasper County focuses on heritage tourism with the stately homes of Monticello. The city of Monticello has a Facebook page that provides occasional tourism-related updates and the Monticello-Jasper County Chamber of Commerce has a Facebook page that is updated several times daily.

Selected tourist Attractions in Jasper County: Yoder's General Store, Jasper County Historic Courthouse, Sac-O-Suds, Yellow Rose Farm, Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center & Museum, Monticello Crossroads Scenic Byway & Trailhead, Annual Deer Festival, Shady Dale Rodeo

Morgan County: Morgan County has a strong tradition of heritage tourism in Madison, as well as countywide success with agritourism. Like several other Northeast Georgia communities, promotion of the County and the county seat is a joint venture. The Madison-Morgan CVB has a very active Pinterest account with many followers and pins. The Facebook and Instagram pages are both updated several times weekly. The Madison-Morgan Chamber of Commerce has a Facebook account that posts several times per week.

Selected Tourist Attractions in Morgan County: Heritage Hall, The Madison Artists Guild, The Rogers House & Rose Cottage, Crafdal Farm Alpacas, Madison-Morgan Cultural Center, Morgan County African American Museum, Hard Labor Creek State Park



Figure 10 The Madison Museum of Art features a collection of fine art from around the world.

Newton County: Newton County capitalizes on the presence of the film industry and markets tourism focused on movies and television. Heritage and nature tourism, including Emory’s historic Oxford College campus, can also be found in Newton County. The Covington-Newton Chamber of Commerce has a very active Facebook account that posts several times daily. The Covington-



Figure 11 The Newton County Courthouse in Covington

Newton County CVB has linked Facebook and Instagram accounts that are active and post several times daily. It also has a Twitter account and tweets multiple times weekly, a YouTube account, and a Pinterest account that has very active boards and a healthy number of followers.

Selected tourist Attractions in Newton County: Cornish Creek Reservoir/Lake Varner, Ghost Tours, Walk of Stars Tours, Oxford College, Old Church & Kitty’s Cottage, Mystic Grill

Oconee County: Oconee County focuses on agritourism, heritage, nature, and arts tourism. Both the Oconee County and City of Watkinsville government websites have links and pages to promote tourism. The Oconee County Chamber of Commerce posts daily to its Facebook page. The Instagram account is updated several times weekly and there is a Chamber of Commerce presence on LinkedIn. The Oconee County Tourism & Visitors Bureau has a Facebook page with multiple daily posts promoting all of the tourism entities within Oconee County, an Instagram account that has new posts approximately once per week, and a YouTube channel.

Selected tourist Attractions in Oconee County: Eagle Tavern Museum, Oconee Heritage Park, Winterhawk Pottery & Home, Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation, Miller’s Blueberry Farm, Elder Mill Covered Bridge, Washington Farms



Figure 12 The William Harris Homestead (ca 1825) in Walton County is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Walton County: Heritage, culinary, and music tourism can be found in Walton County. The Walton County Chamber of Commerce, which promotes businesses within the county, has a Facebook page that is updated on a daily basis, and a Twitter account. The Instagram account is also updated on a daily basis. The City of Monroe has a visitor's center and museum but it has almost no online presence beyond a mention on the Downtown Monroe page, which offers a visitor's guide and promotes events and tourism-related businesses in the City. The Monroe City government operates the social media accounts. The City of Loganville has a Facebook page promoting tourism with several weekly posts about community events, and the City of Social Circle has social media that communicates community news.

Selected tourist Attractions in Walton County: McDaniel-Tichenor House, William Harris Homestead, Blue Willow Inn Restaurant, Historical Society of Walton County, Social Circle Theater, Walton County Music Guild

The Classic South

Greene County: Greene County promotes heritage, nature, and culinary tourism. The county government's website is very tourism-oriented and highlights local attractions. The Greene County Chamber of Commerce and the Greene County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) both have social media presences. The Chamber's Facebook page is updated on a daily basis, the Twitter account offers new tweets several times weekly, and the Pinterest page is very active with the creation of pins. The CVB's "Visit Lake Oconee" Facebook page posts several times per week and its Instagram and Twitter accounts are also updated several times weekly. The Greene County CVB has integrated its Pinterest page into the organization's website and is using it to promote weddings and events.

Selected tourist Attractions in Greene County: Union Point Museum, Lake Oconee, Greene County Historical Society Museum, The Ritz-Carlton Reynolds, Redlands Wildlife Management Area, Genuine Georgia, The Old Gaol, Iron Horse

Oglethorpe County: Agritourism, heritage, and nature tourism can be found in Oglethorpe County. The County government has a section on its website dedicated to tourism and promotion of local attractions, restaurants, and shopping. The County and Chamber of Commerce both maintain social media sites to promote tourism in Oglethorpe County. The Chamber of Commerce's Facebook page is a group page rather than a public-facing page, so that only members of the chamber see its content.

Selected tourist Attractions Oglethorpe County: Historic County Jail, Watson Mill Bridge State Park, Shaking Rock Park, Historic Smithonia Farm, Durham Place, Longshot Farms, and Buffalo Creek



Figure 13 Historic Oglethorpe County Jail

Resources

Professional Development

Tourism professionals have many opportunities for continuing education and development. The State of Georgia presents the [Governor's Tourism Conference](#), an annual event that is the largest tourism gathering in Georgia. The [Southeast Tourism Society](#) hosts educational opportunities through webinars and its conference, including Marketing College, the Travel & Tourism Trade Show, and the STS Connections Meeting. [The Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus](#) offers annual events and symposiums to add to educational opportunities. The [U.S. Travel Association](#) offers webinars for tourism professionals, forums, and advocacy opportunities. [Destinations International](#) offers educational resources online for travel professionals including a newsletter, webinars, blog, member forum, and a resource databank.



Figure 14 Guidestones in Elberton

Resiliency and Emergency Preparedness

In times of crisis, the tourism industry can play an important role even when visitors are discouraged from coming into the community. Restaurants, tourist attractions, and local businesses can still reach people while regular economic activity is disrupted. In light of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, tourism faces one of its greatest challenges of the modern era. However, the industry can lead the way in economic recovery in a post-coronavirus environment. The tourism industry can also be affected by natural disasters and economic downturns, and needs to be prepared for these types of disruptions. Tourism professionals should take a short-term approach to help the immediate community during the crisis and then a long-term approach of encouraging planning and travel ideas once it is safe to do so. Online sources are vital in each approach, both in informing the public of new initiatives and programs in the local community, as well as in helping people create plans and ideas for travel in the future.

Examples of Community-Building Support in Times of Crisis

Support Athens' Own –This campaign exists primarily on Facebook through a new group of the same name. People are encouraged to use the #SupportAthensOwn hashtag when sharing online information about fundraisers, pictures of restaurant carry-out or small business purchases to demonstrate their engagement with local businesses. The Athens CVB website also has recent content with ways to support restaurants, musicians, and shops, including lists of virtual events and tours on the events calendar and in the newsletter.

Georgia Grown – Instead of in-person farm visits, Georgia Grown is shifting to curbside pickup and delivery initiatives so that farms can still market their products to the public.

Ready Set Go -- Collaborative community campaign from the Athens CVB to restore consumer confidence and generate economic recovery. The initiative allows business owners to establish and share protocols and methods they are employing to ensure people's health and safety so they can communicate as a group that Athens will be ready to reopen safely.

University of Georgia Small Business Development Center – UGA provides virtual consulting and online resources that help small businesses in the tourism industry access available assistance.

Emergency Resources

[Athens-Clarke County Coronavirus Information and Resource Page](#)
[Centers for Disease Control](#)
[Georgia Department of Health](#)
[Explore Georgia](#)
[Destinations International Resource Page](#)
[NEGRC COVID-19 Response Hub](#)
[The Travel Vertical Resource Page](#)
[US Travel Association Emergency Preparedness and Response Guide](#)

APPENDIX

Northeast Georgia Community Convention and Visitor Bureaus/Chambers of Commerce

The Northeast Georgia Mountains Tourism Region

Barrow County Chamber of Commerce

Phone 770-867-9444

Website <http://barrowchamber.com/>

Braselton Visitors Bureau Authority

Phone 706-654-3915

Website <http://www.visitbraselton.com>

Elbert County Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-283-5651

Website <https://elbertchamber.com/>

Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-387-0300

Website <http://www.jacksoncountyga.com/>

Jackson County Welcome Center

Phone 706-387-7685

Website <https://www.jacksoncountygov.com/468/Welcome-Center>

Madison County Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-795-3473

Website <http://madisoncountyga.org>

The Historic Heartland Tourism Region

Athens CVB

Phone 706-357-4430

Website <http://www.visitathensga.com>

Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

Phone [706-549-6800](tel:706-549-6800)

Website www.athensga.com

Covington-Newton County CVB

Phone 770-787-3868

Toll free 800-616-8626

Website <http://www.gocovington.com>

Covington-Newton County Chamber of Commerce

Phone [770-786-7510](tel:770-786-7510)

Website <https://gocovington.com/Chamber>

Jasper County Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-468-8994

Website <http://jaspercountycoc.com>

Madison-Morgan CVB

Phone 706-342-4454

Website <http://www.visitmadisonga.com>

The Historic Heartland (continued)

Madison-Morgan Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-438-3120

Website <https://madisonga.org/>

Oconee Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-769-7947

Website <http://www.oconeechamber.org/>

Oconee County Tourism & Visitor Bureau

Phone 706-310-3612

Website <http://www.visitoconee.com>

Walton County Chamber of Commerce

Phone 770-267-6594

Website www.waltonchamber.org

The Classic South Tourism Region

Greene County Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-453-7592

Website <https://greeneccoc.org/>

Greene County CVB

Phone 706-453-0380

Website <http://www.visitlakeoconee.com>

Oglethorpe County Chamber of Commerce

Phone 706-743-3113

Website <https://oglethorpecofc.org/>

Tourism Services

Industry Associations:

[Destination International](#)

[Georgia Agribusiness Council](#)

[Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus](#)

[Georgia Chamber of Commerce](#)

[Georgia Economic Developers Association](#)

[Georgia Hotel & Lodging Association](#)

[Georgia Restaurant Association](#)

[Georgia Travel Association](#)

[Southeast Tourism Society](#)

[Travel South](#)

[US Travel Association](#)

State Agencies with Tourism Programs and/or Services:

[Georgia Council for the Arts](#)

[Georgia Department of Agriculture](#)

[Georgia Department of Community Affairs](#)

[Georgia Department of Natural Resources](#)

[Georgia Department of Transportation](#)

[Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment](#)

[Georgia Humanities Council](#)

[Market Georgia Tourism Portal](#)